

OFFICE OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION
STATE SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION COMMISSION

JANUARY 13, 2010
10:30 AM

CROWNE PLAZA HOTEL – BAYOU/LEVEE ROOM
4728 CONSTITUTION AVENUE
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

PROCEEDINGS/MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The regular monthly Commission meeting was called to order by Chairman Fletcher at 10:30 A.M.

ROLL CALL

The roll was called by Joey Breaux.

Members present: Chairman Randell Fletcher, Ernest Girouard, Ed Yerger, Garland Colvin, John Compton, and George Guillory

Members absent: None
A quorum was present.

Others Present: Kevin Norton, USDA-NRCS State Conservationist; Dwight Landreneau, LSU Ag Center; Brad Spicer, LDAF/SSWCC Executive Director; Joey Breaux, LDAF-OSWC; Eugene Woods, Lower Delta SWCD; Thomas Vitrano, Crescent SWCD; Donavon Taves, East Carroll SWCD; Bruce Frazier, Dugdemona SWCD; Charles Severance, Capital SWCD; and Reggie Skains, D'Arbonne SWCD.

Chairman Fletcher asked Mr. Compton to give the invocation.

Chairman Fletcher said that before we take up the approval of the minutes that he would like to recognize Mr. George Guillory for his service on the State Commission and especially for the outstanding job he has done as Chairman of the commission over the past two years. He said the inscription on the plaque states:

PRESENTED
TO
GEORGE GUILLORY
JANUARY 14, 2010

In appreciation for your leadership and service as
Chairman of the State Soil and Water Conservation Commission
From
December 2007 to December 2009

Chairman Fletcher again thanked Mr. Guillory for his service. Mr. Guillory said that he is honored that Area IV elected him to serve on the Commission and greatly appreciated the opportunity the Commission gave him to serve as Chairman for the past two years.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

Chairman Fletcher called for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2009 State Commission meeting.

Motion: Mr. Colvin made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 3, 2009 Commission meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. Yerger and passed unanimously.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Chairman Fletcher said they would next take up Unfinished Business and requested Mr. Spicer to report on the items listed on the agenda.

SWCD Farm Bill Implementation Report

Mr. Spicer said that several districts are behind schedule on earning their Farm Bill funds. He said that he is requesting approval from the Commission to sweep the funds in early February and redistribute them to the districts that have heavier workloads and are out of Farm Bill funds.

Motion: Dr. Girouard made a motion to have Mr. Spicer evaluate which districts will likely not earn all their Farm Bill funds and to redistribute these funds by March 1, 2010 to districts that have heavier workloads. The motion was seconded by Mr. Yerger and passed unanimously.

Mr. Spicer said they are in the process of completing a new Farm Bill Cooperative Agreement that will start in April 2010. He said that the formula for distributing the Farm Bill funds has been adjusted to better reflect the actual workload associated with managing Farm Bill programs and implementing the associated conservation measures.

Motion: Mr. Compton made a motion to have Mr. Spicer distribute the new Farm Bill funds according to the NRCS/OSWC Cooperative Agreement formula. The motion was seconded by Mr. Guillory and passed unanimously.

District Audits

Mr. Spicer said that all 44 districts completed their audits or compilations and were submitted to the Legislative Auditor's Office on or before December 31, 2009. He said that to his knowledge no district had any serious citing. He said the cost for the 44 audits and compilations was nearly \$90,000. He said when excluding the two that required full audits, the average cost for the 41 districts that used Mr. Tate's services was about \$1,700 each and ranged from \$1,400 to \$2,100.

LACD Annual Meeting

Chairman Fletcher asked Dr. Girouard to brief the Commission on the LACD program. Dr. Girouard said that they have a great program planned starting with the LACD Board of Directors Meeting starting at 1:30 PM today. He said Commissioner Strain will give the welcoming address at the Opening Ceremonies at 5:00 PM this evening. He said other highlights include reports from state agriculture and conservation leaders, state legislators discussing state priorities Thursday morning and the Master Farmer Recognition luncheon at Thursday noon where Congressman Bill Cassidy will also speak. He said he did not fully realize the amount of work it took to plan and conduct an annual meeting. Dr. Girouard thanked the Office of Soil and Water Conservation, the Natural Resources Conservation Service staffs and district employees for their efforts in planning the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Chairman Fletcher said they will now take up New Business and asked Mr. Norton to give the NRCS Report.

NRCS State Conservationist Report

Mr. Norton handed out copies of his printed report, reminding the group of the new report design and that comments and suggestions were welcome. He pointed out a new section titled "Upcoming Events", which in this issue depicts the current LACD Annual Meeting and the Ag Expo and LA Cattlemen's Association Meeting in Monroe, Louisiana, the 2010 Ag Outlook Conference in Alexandria and the Technology and Management Conference, also in Alexandria.

Mr. Norton mentioned the retirement reception recently held for Mr. Ron Marcantel and that one would be held for Mr. Ed Giering near the end of this month. He said that he has selected Ms. Sarah Haymaker, District Conservationist in Monroe, to fill Mr. Marcantel's vacant position as Assistant State Conservationist/Operations, and she will begin work in that position February 15, 2010. Mr. Norton said that the vacancy announcement for the position of State Conservation Engineer, left vacant by Mr. Giering's retirement, is currently being advertised with Brad Sticker, Assistant State Conservation Engineer acting in that position.

Mr. Norton said that all Farm Bill activities are in motion and Locally-Led Meetings are being conducted by the SWCDs with assistance of the District Conservationist. He said Locally Led information is to be compiled prior to April 15, 2010 for review by the State Technical Advisory Committee. He said that the upcoming NRCS technical assistance agreement with the SWCDs is being developed and the formula for SWCD allocations through this agreement has been revised to more accurately reflect statewide Farm Bill workloads among districts. Mr. Norton said he will review this further with the State Commission at their next meeting.

Mr. Norton said this concluded his report.

Correspondence

Chairman Fletcher asked Mr. Spicer to continue with the agenda items under Correspondence.

Mr. Spicer said the Commission members have several emails in their folder covering such items as the Obama Administration opposing the petitions by agriculture interests to have the Supreme Court consider the lower court decision requiring farmers to get permits to apply pesticides, the repeal of estate tax and failure of the Senate to enact a biodiesel tax credit.

Mr. Spicer said he received a call from his office regarding an extension of a current contract between the Rapids SWCD and the Louisiana National Guard (LANG). He said the district emailed a copy of the LA010-A-008 agreement to the OSWC for consideration by the Commission. He said if his review of the agreement is consistent with the current Rapides/LANG agreement approved by the Commission last year, that he be approved to send a letter to Rapides giving them approval to enter a new agreement with LANG.

Motion: Mr. Guillory made a motion to approve the Rapides/LANG LA010-A-008 agreement emailed to the OSWC. The motion was seconded by Mr. Compton and passed unanimously.

Mr. Spicer said the last item is a letter from the East Carroll SWCD requesting authorization for one of their board members to attend the NACD Annual meeting in Orlando, Florida January 31 through February 3, 2010.

Motion: Mr. Compton made a motion to approve the East Carroll district to reimburse the SWCD board member to attend the NACD Annual meeting in Orlando, Florida January 31 through February 3, 2010. The motion was seconded by Mr. Guillory and passed unanimously.

Mr. Spicer asked if there were any questions and if not, that concluded correspondence.

Supervisor Resignations/Appointments and Reappointments

Chairman Fletcher asked Mr. Spicer to report on the supervisor resignations and appointments. Mr. Spicer said there were no resignations. He said and there are four conservation districts requesting the State Commission to appoint the following supervisors to a new term in office:

Avoyelles SWCD, Mr. Burton Newton reappointed to fill his expired appointed position. Term will begin February 25, 2010 and will expire on February 25, 2013.

Morehouse SWCD, Mr. John M. Yeldell reappointed to fill his expired appointed position. Term will begin February 24, 2010 and will expire on February 24, 2013.

New River SWCD, Mr. Ricky Roussel reappointed to fill his expired appointed position. Term will begin February 28, 2010 and will expire on February 28, 2013.

Northeast SWCD, Mr. Glen Williams reappointed to fill his expired appointed position. Term will begin February 24, 2010 and will expire on February 24, 2013.

Motion: Mr. Compton made a motion to approve the appointments of supervisors. The motion was seconded by Mr. Yerger and passed unanimously.

Supervisor's Training

Chairman Fletcher asked Mr. Breaux to present recommendations for implementation of the required district supervisors training. Mr. Breaux said that the most feasible training schedule would be to conduct a two-hour supervisor's training per year in each of the five (5) Areas, with priority given to conducting the sessions in conjunction with each of the annual Area Meetings. He said that this was done last year and those Areas where supervisors participated seemed to prefer the smaller groups and being in the company of other supervisors from within their area. Mr. Breaux said that the training sessions would be planned and conducted in cooperation with the NRCS, and that this training schedule should not present a problem for the OSWC or the NRCS since each have staff that regularly attend the Area Meetings. Mr. Breaux said that in the event that an LACD Area Vice President chooses not to hold a supervisors training session in conjunction with their Area Meeting then a training session for supervisors in that Area would be scheduled for a time and place most suitable for those supervisors who are required to attend a training session. Mr. Breaux said that if the Commission approves, the PPM addressing supervisor's training requirements will be amended to reflect these changes.

Motion: Mr. Colvin made a motion to amend the State Commission's PPM #13, *Supervisors Training* to holding supervisors training sessions in conjunction with the five annual LACD Area Meetings or to schedule supervisors training sessions on another date. The motion was seconded by Mr. Compton and passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Fletcher asked if there was any other business to come before the Commission. Mr. Spicer said that on the first of January LDAF was cut an additional 1.6 million dollars. He said Commissioner Strain, as a result of earlier budget adjustments and restricted spending, was able to incorporate the mid-year cuts into the department budget without layoffs or furloughing employees. He said thanks to the Commissioner's actions, the OSWC or SWCDs did not have to take any mid-year cuts. Mr. Spicer said they should thank the Commissioner for his efforts to maintain strong performing LDAF programs under such extensive cuts to the LDAF budget over the past two years. Chairman Fletcher said we are fortunate to have a Commissioner that strongly supports the state and district soil and water conservation programs.

Chairman Fletcher asked if there was any other business to come before the Commission and there was none.

NEXT MEETING

Chairman Fletcher said the next State Commission Meeting is scheduled for 1:15 PM Tuesday, February 23, 2010 in the Veterans' Memorial Auditorium, 5825 Florida Boulevard, Baton Rouge Louisiana.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chairman Fletcher asked if there was any other business or comments. None replied.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Fletcher said if there was no other business that he will accept a motion to adjourn.

Motion: Mr. Guillory made a motion to adjourn at 11:45 A.M. The motion was seconded by Mr. Yerger and passed unanimously.

/s/ *Randell Fletcher*

Randell Fletcher, Chairman
State Soil and Water Conservation Commission